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R 171332Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY LOME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9284
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS LOME 000432

STATE FOR AF/W, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TO](#)
SUBJECT: TOGO: DOES THE RPT WANT TO PLAY BALL?

REF: LOME 349

¶1. SUMMARY. On Nov. 16, Poloff met with the chief of staff of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Yawo Kpamatchou, to discuss his recent trip to the U.S. for UNGA and the ruling party's, Rally of the Togolese People (RPT), role in the 2010 presidential elections. Kpamatchou expressed great interest in renewing contact with Embassy Lome and opined at length about President Faure's presidential candidacy. (Note. See reftel for a description of political players. End note.) END SUMMARY.

¶2. Chief of staff Kpamatchou, also a leader of the RPT youth group, met with Poloff to discuss the RPT's interest in renewing ties with Embassy Lome. He alluded to the lack of contact between the party and the embassy in the past, which he admitted was mostly due to the absence of interest on the RPT's part. He expressed great enthusiasm to strengthen the party's relationship with the embassy, especially in light of the upcoming election.

¶3. Kpamatchou spoke at length about President Faure's candidacy and why he is the best candidate for the country's well being. He views Faure as an arbiter who wants to reform the RPT and to reason with the opposition in order to bring together the two extremes: RPT as the ultra conservative and the Union Force of Change (UFC), the main opposition party, as the ultra radical. Kpamatchou spoke of former president Eyadema, Faure's father, and said that there is no comparison between the two, as Faure is a visionary and a reformist. He stated that unless there is such an arbiter, the two extremes would end up fighting instead of building and advancing the country.

¶4. Kpamatchou stated several times that Faure strongly cautions his supporters to avoid violence during the elections. He pointed out that the RPT youth group is in direct dialogue with the senior leadership. He hinted that unless the party leaders give the go ahead, the youth group would not act on their own. However, the RPT is suspicious of the opposition's insistence that they will not be responsible for any violence. They believe that the opposition will purposefully sabotage the elections by rallying its own youth group to violence. This is not too far fetched as the opposition, especially the UFC, does have a tendency to incite its youth to extreme actions.

¶5. When asked to confirm media speculation of whether or not there are disagreements within the party about the reforms Faure is attempting, Kpamatchou denied the existence of intra-party clashes. However, when pressed further, he offhandedly mentioned that some of the Faure - appointed ministers have occasional disagreements with some of the party old timers about the implementation of the ideas Faure introduces. He also denied the media speculation that Faure plans to form his own party if he wins the presidential elections.

¶6. COMMENT. This RPT approach to Embassy Lome is long overdue. Poloff believes that the RPT is beginning to understand that in order to garner international support, it has to learn to play ball with other teams. END COMMENT.

Hawkins